

NSC BRIEFING

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16 September 1959

SINO-INDIAN BORDER DISPUTE

- I. There have been no further military clashes since 26 August but Peiping, which was silent on the issue up to last week, has now begun to publicize its side of the dispute.
- II. The Chinese statements reject the McMahon Line as "illegal" and charge that Indian troops have invaded Chinese territory.
 - A. Peiping points to some British and Indian maps which show the boundary as essentially in accordance with Peiping's claims. These maps were published ten to twenty years after the McMahon Line was drawn in 1914.
 - B. As matter of fact, some US World War II maps also give Peiping's version of the boundary.
- III. India stands firmly on the argument that the McMahon Line is the legal boundary.
 - A. The McMahon Line is supposed to follow the crest ridge of the Great Himalaya range, which constitutes the natural geographic boundary between Tibet and India, Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal.
 - B. But the crestline is often broken by transverse valleys and ridges. No detailed ground survey has ever been made and no border markers placed. Hence there is plenty of room for disagreement. ^{IV}Peiping has suggested "step-by-step" negotiations but even if discussions on the problem are begun they are unlikely to lead to a definitive settlement in the foreseeable future.

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IV. The Chinese are also making India's position difficult by linking the Dalai Lama to the current border dispute.

A. A speech by the Chinese Foreign Minister last Sunday as well as various press editorials take strong exception to the "unfriendly" activities of the Dalai Lama being countenanced by New Delhi.

V. There have been conflicting reports received on a Soviet desire to mediate.

✓ A. Khrushchev is reported [] as having offered on 12 September to visit New Delhi to discuss the border situation after his trip to Peiping. Nehru is said to have accepted.

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